

# **Committee on Resources, Full Committee**

- - Rep. James V. Hansen, Chairman

U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515-6201 - - (202) 225-2761

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## **Witness Statement**

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### **TESTIMONY OF JOHN CRAWFORD TULELAKE, CALIFORNIA**

#### **TO THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES JUNE 16, 2001**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee:

My name is John Crawford and I am a Klamath Project farmer. I have lived in the Klamath Basin my entire life. I am a member of the Tulelake Irrigation District Board of Directors, past president of the Klamath Water Users Association, member of the Board of Trustees of the Nature Conservancy of Oregon, a member of the Upper Klamath Basin Working Group and the Klamath Basin Ecosystem Foundation.

As part of my testimony today I have the humbling responsibility of representing Klamath Project agriculture including the veterans and the Hispanic members of our community. Klamath Project irrigators are often accused by environmental extremists of being highly subsidized and having not paid our portion of the construction costs of the Klamath Project. In fact we have repaid every penny of our obligation to the Klamath Project and the following statement will provide insight to other accomplishments of the agricultural community:

"Through the half century since the Klamath Project was completed, the Federal Government has invested about \$14.7 million in construction of the project. During that same period the project has produced crops having a gross value of more than \$350 million. During the last 10 years alone, project lands have produced 67 million bushels of potatoes valued at \$80 million, and 42 million bushels of barley valued at \$62 million. Federal tax collections alone since 1940 have reached a cumulative total of about \$95 million, or more than 6 times the project's cost.

Two hundred thousand acres of fertile land have been reclaimed from swamp and arid prairie. More than 1,600 farm families and scores of merchants and tradesmen derive an excellent livelihood from this reclamation project. About 44,000 acres of the 200,000 acres reclaimed were originally in the public domain. These public lands have been dedicated to the most worthy purpose of assisting our war veterans. I can think of no finer program. Since 1922 settlement opportunities have been provided to more than 600 veterans of World Wars I and II.

Although the accomplishments in the Klamath project area in the past half century have been great, there is still room for expansion, and even greater accomplishments are in store for this area in the future if full development of the water and land resource potential is effectively achieved.

I believe that you will find this a very interesting study and another example showing that

expenditures for our reclamation program constitute one of the nation's wisest investments."

The above is an excerpt of the statement of Clair Engle, the Chairman, to the members of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee dated May 16, 1957.

That wise investment has provided over 6 billion dollars in farm products based on the value of today's dollar.

Words cannot begin to describe the pain being experienced in our communities. Farm families have lost income. Long-term commodity supply contracts have been terminated. Debts will not be paid. Dreams are being shattered. The loss is not only economic. It is a loss of our identity. There is no separation between our work and the rest of our lives. We are farmers and ranchers.

Recently, I have seen Tom Hanks of "Saving Private Ryan" fame soliciting support for the World War II memorial in Washington D.C. As a life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars I fully support this effort, but believe there is no better place to recognize the admiration and respect earned by our World War II veterans than here in the Klamath Basin. This can be accomplished if our government honors its commitment to the veterans who homesteaded the Tulelake area of the Basin.

The vast majority of the Basin's Hispanic people are permanent residents of the area. These proud leaders and valued members of our community are inexorably linked to Basin agriculture. No water has equated to loss of jobs and some of the men have already been forced to leave the area in search of work. Now that the school year has ended this exodus will continue and escalate. It is tragic that we may lose our friends and neighbors that make up the Hispanic community.

How have we arrived at this deplorable and devastating outcome that destroys our communities and provides no recognizable benefit for any of the endangered species? This outcome is the product of a corrupted scientific process and a disproportionate focus on the Klamath Project.

Instead of having applicant status in both the Section 7 consultations for suckers and Coho salmon as we held in the development of the 1992 opinion for suckers we have been excluded from the salmon consultation and relegated to commenting on the sucker biological opinion after the fact. The Department of Interior has ignored two different sucker restoration plans developed by the Klamath Water Users Association in their preparation of biological assessments and opinions. They have ignored credible peer review including Oregon State University's assessment of the sucker biological opinion that said the opinion was comprised of "illogical conclusions", "inconsistent and contradictory statements", "factual inaccuracies and rampant speculation". The review also stated that the document had the potential to severely damage the public credibility of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS).

Members of Congress and stakeholders continually ask the same questions, but honest answers never seem to materialize. If all the fish kills in Upper Klamath Lake have occurred at high water levels why is the average fish kill elevation the same as that prescribed as the minimum level in the biological opinion. If no fish kills have occurred at low levels why is the concern so heavily weighted that they may occur in the future? If the only viable year class of suckers recruited in the last ten years (1991) occurred in a low water year elevation 4138 why is that not recognized? If the healthiest sucker population with the most year classes occurs in Clear Lake where virtually no emergent vegetation exists why does the USF&WS insist that the relationship between emergent vegetation and lake levels in Upper Klamath Lake is so important? If fish kills on the Klamath River (including Coho) occurred in August of 1994, May and June of 2000 and

May of 2001 when releases were being substantially augmented with water from Upper Klamath Lake and the temperature of that water was toxic to fish why does the National Marine Fisheries Service insist that more water regardless of its quality is better? Since fish returns (particularly Coho) were excellent in 1995 and 1996 following the lowest flows since Link River Dam was constructed why won't the agencies acknowledge that other factors may have more influence than flows in the main stem Klamath below Iron Gate Dam?

The demand that the Klamath Project must shoulder all of the responsibility for providing lake levels, river flows and any other needs the agencies can dream up goes well beyond unfair and borders on the ridiculous. There are two other federal irrigation projects, thousands of acres above Upper Klamath Lake, thousands of acres irrigated from the Shasta and Scott rivers. The federal government does not have the courage or creativity to deal with this iniquity. It has simply been chosen as easy target.

The perception shared by the tribes and some environmental groups that all of the water stored for irrigation plus all of the inflow for the year is still not enough to protect resources even with no deliveries to agriculture and the refuges is completely counter productive to attaining agriculture's cooperation for any endeavor. The resentment that this attitude has instilled in the community will result in long-term harm to agriculture's support for restoration projects and activities. We have initiated or supported the creation of nearly 25,000 acres of wetlands that have changed from productive agricultural lands in private ownership to federal or conservancy ownership. We have supported appropriations for the refuges and collaborated with the California Waterfowl Association and Ducks Unlimited to improve wetland habitats. Unlike others we have never demanded all the water and never will. We support our fellow food producers in the commercial fishing industry and have focused our restoration efforts on improving water quality. We think that these improvements, which have been well documented, provide the most positive impact on the fisheries relied upon by the commercial fleet and also improve conditions for endangered suckers and the trust resources of the downstream tribes as well. It has been stated by Glen Spain of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, that market conditions in the Klamath Basin may make agriculture's future an effort in futility. Like the fishing industry we have fought through tough times before and survived. We can prosper again, but only with an adequate supply of water. The unfortunate truth for both fisherman and farmers is that the cheapest meal I can think of today consists of a big baked potato and a fillet of pen raised Chilean "Coho" available at Safeway in Klamath Falls for \$1.89 per pound.

The devastated condition of this Basin not only includes a \$250 million loss of farm gate revenue and the risk of public safety related to wind and soil erosion that continues to occur, but the horrible degradation of 200,000 acres of habitat for hundreds of species living in the Klamath Project. How can we justify the elimination of this habitat in the name of single species management in Upper Klamath Lake when that management will probably not benefit the endangered suckers.

If an adequate economic relief package is not forthcoming the long-term harm and damage may be so severe that the people of this community cannot survive. Existing disaster and drought relief programs provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture can probably not be modified or adapted to provide for these circumstances. Economic relief must be crafted to accommodate the tremendous need based on what has occurred in this Basin.

The California community wants to thank Governor Gray Davis for taking quick, decisive action and providing immediate relief in the form of 5 million dollars for the drilling of wells to augment our non-existent allocation of water.

The primary concern that I have regarding this entire issue is that I cannot identify a single action taken by the Department of Interior that will prevent us from being in this identical situation next year. I don't believe that any type of long-term solution has been addressed by the federal agencies.

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